



# Australian Carbon Credit Unit Scheme (ACCU Scheme) Plantation Forestry Notification Guidelines

## Guidance for proponents

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry



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# Summary

The Australian Carbon Credit Unit Scheme (ACCU Scheme) Plantation Forestry Method (the method) provides a mechanism to increase carbon sequestration through the following eligible activities:

- 1) establishing and maintaining a new plantation forest for commercial harvesting of wood products (Schedule 1)
- 2) converting an existing short rotation plantation forest to a long rotation plantation forest for commercial harvesting of wood products (Schedule 2)
- 3) avoiding conversion of an existing or recently harvested plantation forest (Schedule 3)
- 4) transitioning a plantation forest to a permanent forest, in situations where that plantation is at risk of being converted to non-forested land (Schedule 4).

Schedules are the types of projects used under this method.

To complement the eligibility requirements of the method, the Australian Government Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (the Agriculture Minister) has a role to assess whether proposed projects would lead to an undesirable impact on agricultural production in the region where the project would be located.

Anyone who intends to apply for either a new plantation forestry project or an expansion of an existing plantation forestry project under Schedule 1 are required to submit an ACCU scheme plantation forestry notification (notification) by email to the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (the department) so that an assessment of the impact on agricultural production can be made.

For this determination, land in the project area is eligible land appropriate for the new plantation project activity if, on the eligibility date:

- (a) there had been no relevant plantation on the land within the previous 7 years; and
- (b) there had been no native forest on the land within the previous 7 years.

## Using the ACCU Scheme Plantation Forestry Notification Guidelines

This document is to be taken as the guidelines as referred to in section 20B [Carbon Credits \(Carbon Farming Initiative\) Rule 2015](#) (the Rule). These guidelines are designed to provide clarity around the requirements to complete a notification and the associated assessment process. These guidelines should be read in conjunction with the relevant legislation. This document does not provide guidance on the [ACCU project registration application process undertaken by the Clean Energy Regulator \(the Regulator\)](#).

This version of the guidelines is current as 2<sup>nd</sup> January 2025 and based on the [Carbon Credits \(Carbon Farming Initiative\) Rule 2015](#). This is a controlled document—any documents appearing in paper form or saved electronically are not controlled and should be checked against the version published on the department's website prior to use.

For ease of reference the following abbreviations are used in these guidelines.

**Table 1 Use of abbreviations**

<b>Abbreviation</b>	<b>Full name</b>
ACCUs	Australian Carbon Credit Units
the Agriculture Minister	Australian Government Minister responsible for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, or their department. In this document the term 'Agriculture Minister' can also refer the department.
the Rule	<i>Carbon Credits (Carbon Farming Initiative) Rule 2015</i>
the Act	<i>Carbon Credits (Carbon Farming Initiative) Act 2011</i>
the Regulator	Clean Energy Regulator
the department	Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
ERF	Emissions Reduction Fund
the method	Australian Carbon Credit Units (ACCU Scheme) Plantation Forestry method
notification	Australian Carbon Credit Units plantation notification or an Australian Carbon Credit Units plantation expansion notification
application	Australian Carbon Credit Units Plantation project registration application
Proponent/s	Project proponent/s

# Introduction

## Australian Carbon Credit Units overview

The Australian Carbon Credit Units Scheme is a voluntary scheme that aims to reduce Australia's greenhouse gas emissions by providing incentives for organisations and individuals to adopt new practices and technologies in order to reduce emissions or sequester carbon (capture and storage of carbon).

Emissions reduction activities are undertaken as offsets projects. Each person who seeks to undertake a carbon offsets project will need to make an application to the Regulator. The Regulator will consider whether the proposed project can be undertaken in accordance with a methodology determination (also known as a method) and meet other scheme requirements. A method sets out the rules for estimating emissions reductions for the relevant offset project. Offsets projects undertaken in accordance with a method and approved by the Regulator can generate Australian Carbon Credit Units (ACCUs). ACCUs can be sold to generate income, either to the government through a carbon abatement contract, or in the secondary market. These contracts will guarantee the price and payment for the future delivery of emissions reductions.

## Australian Carbon Credit Units Plantation Forestry Method

The [\*Carbon Credits \(Carbon Farming Initiative—Plantation Forestry\) Methodology Determination 2022\*](#) also known as the ACCU Scheme Plantation Forestry Method (the method) was made by the Minister for the Environment and Energy under subsection 106(4) of the [\*Carbon Credits \(Carbon Farming Initiative\) Act 2011\*](#). This method builds on and replaces the Plantation forestry method (2017).

To ensure that a proposed project is undertaken in accordance with the method, an [application](#) must be lodged with the Regulator for approval.

The [\*Carbon Credits \(Carbon Farming Initiative\) Rule 2015\*](#) (the Rule) details additional administrative procedures under the Act, associated with the method. The Rule provides a complementary role for the Australian Government Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry in assessing whether proposed projects under the method would lead to an undesirable impact on agricultural production in the region where the project would be located. Anyone who intends to apply for either a new plantation forestry project or an expansion of an existing plantation forestry project are required to submit a notification to the department by email.

# 1 Requirements for proponents

Proponents who intend to apply for a project under the method must understand the relevant requirements under the Act, the Method and the Rule. This section outlines the three overarching requirements which proponents are strongly encouraged to understand before submitting a notification and application:

- 1) The notification must be submitted in the period beginning 18 months prior to the date of an application to the Regulator and ending on the day of that application.
- 2) The notification submitted to the department must contain the required information to allow an assessment to be undertaken — see Appendix A for the requirements.
- 3) The project considered by the Agriculture Minister (as outlined in a notification) must be essentially the same project ultimately considered by the Regulator (as outlined in an application).

If the requirements outlined in this section (among others – please refer to the ACCU Scheme project [application process](#) undertaken by the Regulator) are not met, the proposed project will be deemed an ‘excluded offsets project’ and cannot be approved by the Regulator (i.e. the project will be excluded from participating in the ACCU Scheme).

Proponents are encouraged to contact the department via email [erfnotification@aff.gov.au](mailto:erfnotification@aff.gov.au) to discuss the requirements prior to submitting a notification.

Appendix A sets out the relevant requirements in the form of a checklist which can be used by proponents to prepare and review a notification to ensure it includes the required information prior to submission.



## Submission of a notification and application

Anyone who intends to apply for a project under the method, is required to submit:

- 1) a notification by email ([erfnotification@aff.gov.au](mailto:erfnotification@aff.gov.au)) to the department so that the potential for a proposed project to have undesirable impacts on agricultural production can be assessed.
- 2) an application to the Regulator for approval, which is accompanied by a notification which relates to the application and any information sent in connection with that notification.

The notification must be submitted in the period beginning 18 months prior to the date of an application to the Regulator and ending on the day of that application. Please note that proponents can resubmit a notification and application if 18 months has expired. It is the decision of the proponent whether they want to provide a notification to the department before applying to the Regulator, or make an application to the Regulator and notification to the department on the same day.

For each proposed new plantation forestry project or expansion of a project, an application and a notification must be submitted to the Regulator and department respectively. This means that if a project was approved by the Regulator, another project cannot be approved based upon the same notification (i.e. a notification is valid only for one approved project). For example, if an ACCU scheme plantation notification was submitted for a project up to 1,000 hectares anywhere within the Australian Capital Territory, and then a project was approved by the Regulator for 800 hectares, that notification cannot be relied upon to declare a second project of 150 hectares within the Australian Capital Territory; a new notification would be required.

### Method of submitting a notification and all other correspondence and communication

All incoming notifications and subsequent correspondence must be submitted by midnight (12am Eastern Standard Time) to the department via email [erfnotification@aff.gov.au](mailto:erfnotification@aff.gov.au), and include all required information as stipulated in Appendix A, to be considered as submitted on that day. Proponents must identify information in their notification or in any supporting documents that they want treated as confidential and provide reasons for the request. The department reserves the right to accept or refuse requests to treat information as confidential. Confidential information may be released as required or authorised by law.

The Agriculture Minister and the department will also correspond via email to the proponent's nominated contact before midnight (12am Eastern Standard Time), as to be considered to have been received on that day.

Proponents are encouraged to contact the department prior to submitting notifications to ensure they meet the minimum requirements. All questions about the notification process can be referred to the department's Climate Policy Section. Please contact the Climate Policy Section on 02 6272 3933 or email [erfnotification@aff.gov.au](mailto:erfnotification@aff.gov.au).

For more information about project registration under the ACCU Scheme please contact the Clean Energy Regulator on 1300 553 542 or email [enquiries@cleanenergyregulator.gov.au](mailto:enquiries@cleanenergyregulator.gov.au).

## Information required in a notification

There is no prescribed 'application form' required from a proponent, instead a notification is to take the form of a written statement sent to the department via email (ACCUnotification@aff.gov.au).

To make a valid notification the following information must be included:

- 1) The name, address and contact details of the proponent, including a designated email address for the purposes of sending and receiving all correspondence relating to the notification.
- 2) The address/es of the property/ies involved in the project.
- 3) A statement that outlines that the proponent is planning to either:
  - a) for a new project — seek the approval of a project to establish a new plantation forest as an eligible offsets project; or
  - b) for an expansion project — seek an approval of a variation of an existing eligible offsets project to add an area of land to the project area/s.
- 4) The maximum hectares of plantation to be included under the proposed project (please note that your project will be deemed an 'excluded offsets project' by the Regulator if the size of the project in your application exceeds the maximum size of the project stated in your notification).
  - a) For a new project — set out the maximum project area size, in hectares, for all of the proposed project area/s; or
  - b) For an expansion project — set out the maximum additional project area size, in hectares, that will be added to the project area/s.
- 5) A geospatial map (preferably a shapefile) of the proposed ACCU Scheme project area/s at an appropriate scale consistent with the [CFI Mapping Guidelines | Clean Energy Regulator](#).
- 6) A statement outlining the previous five years of agricultural land use history for the project area, including the area, in hectares, of each land use type (including specific commodity types e.g. names of crops and/or livestock).
- 7) A statement outlining the previous five years of agricultural production history of each agricultural commodity produced by the project area. It is in the interest of the proponent to include:
  - a) total production (actuals) by actual crop yields and stock numbers; or
  - b) where five years of production data is not available, a [statutory declaration](#) setting out why an agricultural production history is unavailable.

In the absence of this data, averaged regional data will be used by the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences as a proxy for analysing the significance of the agricultural production being removed.

- 8) A statement outlining the project's potential impact on agricultural production in the region. Proponents should consider projected changes to the region's agricultural production as a result of the proposed project, as far as these relate to the commodity/ies which were produced within the proposed project area/s. Consideration should be given to:
- a) Effects on regional agricultural industries, including potential reduced supply to agricultural processors and agribusinesses. Where available, proponents should provide the name and location of the processor related to the commodities produced in the project area/s.
  - b) Bushfire, soil, weed and pest management impacts of the proposed project — the project should not impact negatively on surrounding agricultural production enterprises because absentee landlords are not (amongst other things) managing bushfire risks, weeds, pests or erosion.

In relation to the project's potential impact on agricultural production in the region, 'region' means the area of land, which is:

- i. in the vicinity of the proposed project area; and
- ii. may be subject to undesirable impacts on agricultural production as a result of the proposed project going ahead.

In making an assessment, the Agriculture Minister may use Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Statistical Area Level 2 (SA2) and Level 4 (SA4) boundaries, or multiple areas where required.

- 9) Any other information that the proponent deems to be relevant.

Please note that these guidelines only requires information that is listed in the Rule. However, as this may be subject to change, it is suggested that proponents ensure that they have access to the most recent version of the guidelines.

If a purported notification being lodged does not contain the information outlined above, it will be considered to be incomplete and invalid. As a result, it will be taken never to have been made and will not be assessed. The proponent will be contacted via their nominated email address to inform them that a notification is invalid and cannot be assessed.

If a purported notification is found to be invalid, it is suggested that the proponent consider withdrawing the project application if it has been submitted to the Regulator, as the project will be an excluded offsets project. Proponents may submit a new application after submitting a valid notification to the department in order to comply with this requirement, however this still does not guarantee that the assessment will result in the project being an eligible offsets project.

## Notification and application consistency

The project that is the subject of a notification to the department must be largely the same as the project in an application to the Regulator. That means the project outlined in the application, including the area (size), location and activities must be consistent with, and no greater than, that assessed by the Agriculture Minister. This means:

- 1) All of the proposed project area as set out in the application must be within the project area set out in the notification.
- 2) The size of the proposed project area as set out in the application must not exceed the maximum project area size set out in the notification.
  - a) This allows the project proponent to come forward with either an exact proposal for a specific project area or a broader area of land on which they will establish plantations — up to a particular size limit. For example, a project proponent could identify 20,000 hectares in Queensland as potentially being part of a project but specify that no more than 2,000 hectares of this area would be converted into plantations. This would allow a project proponent to submit a notification for an area before they had acquired the land to undertake the project.

## 2 Assessment process

### Responsibility of assessing and processing notifications

The Agriculture Minister, with the support of the department, will be responsible for processing and assessing notifications. Notifications will be processed in order of receipt, however where a proponent submits more than one notification for a project, only the latest notification will be assessed.

### Assessment outcomes

One of two outcomes can arise from the assessment of a notification: the project either becomes an excluded offset project or the project can proceed to be considered by the Regulator. If the project proceeds to be considered by the Regulator, the project could be declared an eligible offsets project by the Regulator if they are satisfied that all other relevant requirements have been met. The proponent will receive notice about the status of their notification, regardless of which outcome arises.

### Excluded projects

Proposed projects will be excluded by the Agriculture Minister (i.e. become an excluded offset project) if a written statement making an adverse impact finding is sent to the proponent and the Regulator. An adverse impact finding is where the Agriculture Minister forms the opinion that the proposed project would result in an undesirable impact on agricultural production in the region where the project would be located. A proposed project would have an undesirable impact if it would have an adverse or harmful impact on agricultural production in the region — including but not limited to agricultural businesses and facilities, and agriculture related businesses and facilities (e.g. agricultural product processors).

Unsuccessful proponents may submit a new notification.

The Agriculture Minister may overturn a past decision that resulted in a project becoming an excluded offsets project, for instance if new information comes to light or circumstances change in the region being assessed. The Agriculture Minister can only overturn adverse impact findings. If a previous adverse impact finding statement is overturned the proponent can then apply to the Regulator to approve the project.

### Projects which can proceed to be assessed by the Regulator

In the absence of an adverse impact finding being made by the Agriculture Minister, the proposed project as outlined in the application can proceed to be considered by the Regulator. It may then be approved as an eligible offsets project by the Regulator if all other relevant scheme requirements are met.

## Assessment considerations

The Agriculture Minister may broadly consider the following factors and the potential for them to have undesirable impact on the region's agricultural production, in forming an opinion about whether to make an adverse impact finding:

- 1) The size of the proposed project area relative to the agricultural region and the proportion of arable or pastoral land in the region to be impacted.
- 2) Types of commodities/industries to be impacted and their relative significance within the region. The relative significance may be determined by considering, among other factors, the size/value of commodities impacted by the proposed project as a proportion of the region's production.
- 3) Impacts on agricultural processors or agribusinesses in the region.
- 4) Impacts on infrastructure for the agricultural industry — for example, the capacity and feasibility of existing infrastructure to support the proposed project and the rest of the region's agricultural industry.
- 5) Industry trends in the relevant region — for example, whether there are growing or declining agricultural industries, or niche market products that will be impacted by the project.
- 6) Recent land use changes.
- 7) Whether the proponent has considered bushfire, soil, weed and pest management for the projects in place.
- 8) Other information on the region's agricultural sector and potential impacts.

## Assessment phases

There can be up to two phases of the assessment process. Firstly, a primary assessment of the notification will be completed within 30 calendar days. Where the Agriculture Minister does not intend to make an adverse impact finding (i.e. intend to exclude a project), the assessment process finishes at this time. Where there is an intent to make an adverse impact finding, an additional assessment is undertaken and will be finalised within a further 45 calendar days.

These assessment timeframes restart where a notification is submitted after being previously withdrawn.

Figure 1 outlines the following assessment process.

## Primary assessment phase

There are two stages to the primary assessment phase. Firstly, the purported notification is assessed upon lodgement to ensure that it contains the required information and is thus valid. The timeframe for assessing the notification under Stage 1 begins on the day it was received if the notification is found to be valid. Secondly, the Agriculture Minister will then assess the notification under Stage 2, after which, one of two outcomes will occur:

- 1) If the Agriculture Minister intends to make an adverse impact finding (i.e. intends to exclude the project), a written statement (the original written statement) will be sent by email to the proponent within 30 calendar days, inviting a response within 20 calendar days. Where the Agriculture Minister intends to make an adverse impact finding, proponents will enter an additional assessment phase.
- 2) If the Agriculture Minister does not intend to make an adverse impact finding, the proponent will be informed via email within 30 calendar days. The project as outlined in the application can then proceed to be considered by the Regulator. The project may only be approved by the Regulator after 30 calendar days has passed since the proponent submitted a notification.

## Additional assessment phase

This phase provides proponents an opportunity to provide a response within 20 calendar days to the Agriculture Minister's intent to make an adverse impact and to have any response considered by the Agriculture Minister, before a final decision is made (Stage 3).

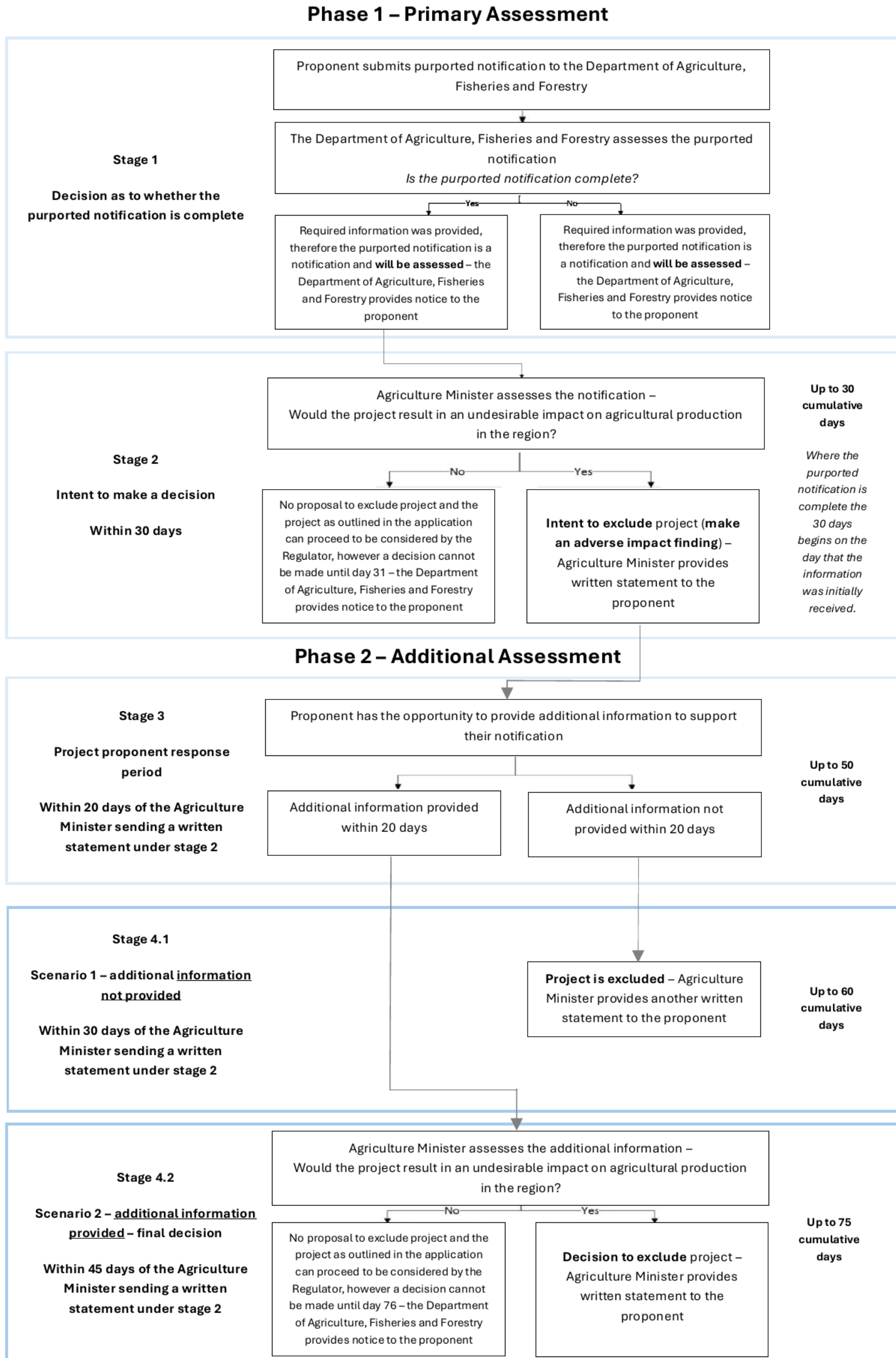
Following the Agriculture Minister's original written statement outlining an intention to make an adverse impact finding, one of the following scenarios may occur:

- 1) Where a response is not received from the proponent within 20 calendar days of the Agriculture Minister's original written statement, another written statement will be sent within 30 calendar days of the original written statement, stating that no response was received. The project will become an excluded offsets project (Stage 4.1).
- 2) Where a response is received from the proponent, one of the following scenarios may occur:
  - a. the Agriculture Minister will send another written statement making an adverse impact finding within 45 calendar days of the Agriculture Minister sending the original written statement; or
  - b. The department will inform the proponent that the Agriculture Minister has not made an adverse impact finding and that the project can proceed to be considered by the Regulator. The project may only be approved by the Regulator after 45 calendar days have passed since the Agriculture Minister sent the original written statement (Stage 4.2 – Scenario 2).

An acknowledgement of receipt of the original written statement that does not address the issues raised by the Agriculture Minister will not be considered a 'response'.

These assessment phases are described in more detail at Appendix B.

Figure 1 Notification assessment process



Source: Department of Agriculture and Water Resources



## 3 Enquiries

All questions about the notification process can be referred to the department's Climate Policy Section. The Climate Policy Section can be contacted on 02 6272 3933 or via email at [erfnotification@aff.gov.au](mailto:erfnotification@aff.gov.au).

More information about project registrations under the ACCU Scheme can be obtained from the Regulator on 1300 553 542 or via email [enquiries@cleanenergyregulator.gov.au](mailto:enquiries@cleanenergyregulator.gov.au).

## 4 Relevant considerations for proponents

### Material inaccuracies

Any misunderstanding arising from a proponent's failure to comply with the guidelines or arising from material inaccuracies in a notification is the responsibility of the proponent. It is the proponent's responsibility to understand the guidelines and requirements to submit a valid notification.

### Withdrawal of notifications

A proponent may withdraw their notification at any point prior to a final decision being made, via a written statement sent by email to [ACCUnotification@aff.gov.au](mailto:ACCUnotification@aff.gov.au)

### False and misleading information

All information submitted must be complete, current and accurate at the time of notification. It is a criminal offence under the *Criminal Code Act 1995* to knowingly give false or misleading information to a Commonwealth officer exercising powers under Commonwealth law.

Furthermore, if the information submitted by a proponent is false or misleading the Regulator retains the right to refuse to declare a project an 'eligible offsets project', or revoke a declaration made in relation to an eligible offsets project. The Regulator also retains the right to seek the relinquishment of ACCUs where false or misleading information has been provided.

### Appeals

Proponents are provided with an opportunity to respond to the Agriculture Minister's written statement of intent to exclude a project. Proponents may take this opportunity to provide further information to support their notification before a final decision is made.

The Agriculture Minister's final decision is not subject to merits review by the Administrative Appeals Tribunal.

Unsuccessful proponents may submit a new notification.

## 5 Handling of information

### Freedom of information

All documents held by the department, including those relating to notifications, are subject to the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* (FOI Act). The FOI Act creates a general right of access to documents held by the department unless a document is exempt (for example, a document may be exempt if disclosure of the document would amount to an unreasonable disclosure of personal or business information). Where a request is made under the FOI Act, access to information, including personal information, will be determined in accordance with the provisions of that Act.

### Confidential information

The confidentiality of the assessment process will be protected, and steps will be taken by the department throughout the assessment process to ensure actual or perceived conflicts of interest are declared and addressed. Proponents must identify information in their notifications or in any supporting documents that they want treated as confidential and provide reasons for the request. The department reserves the right to accept or refuse requests to treat information as confidential. Confidential information may be released as required or authorised by law.

### Privacy notice

Personal information is defined in the *Privacy Act 1988* and includes information about an identified individual, or an individual who is reasonably identifiable.

When you contact the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry to make a general enquiry about the requirements of a Plantation Forestry Notification, you do not have to give your name.

If you intend to apply for a project under the ACCU Scheme Plantation Forestry method, you are required to submit a notification by email to the department and you will need to identify yourself. Information required in the notification is described at Appendix A

The collection of your personal information is required by the *Carbon Credits (Carbon Farming Initiative) Rule 2015*. The department collects this information to assess and make a decision on your notification, as to whether it should be an excluded offsets project. If you fail to provide some or all of the personal information required in the notification, it will be considered invalid.

The department may disclose information related to your notification to the Regulator for the purposes of the assessment of your application for registration under the Plantation Forestry Method, as there is a requirement that the project considered by the Agriculture Minister (as outlined in a notification) must be essentially the same project considered by the Regulator (as outlined in an application).

The department may also disclose your personal information from your notification to other Australian Government agencies, persons or organisations where necessary for the above purposes, provided the disclosure is consistent with the Privacy Act and other relevant laws. Your personal information will be used and stored in accordance with the Australian Privacy Principles.

If essential information to a proponent's notification contains third party personal information, it will be necessary for the proponent to gain consent of the third party to send their information to the department, or remove all reference to a third party's personal information.

For more information about accessing or correcting your personal information or making a complaint, you can view the [department's Privacy Policy](#) or telephone the department on 02 6272 3933.

# Glossary

Some of the terms below are defined in Section 20B(8) of the Rule and those definitions are the authority for the purpose of these guidelines. However, in some instances the definitions in these guidelines provide further information or clarification.

<b>Term</b>	<b>Definition</b>
Adverse impact finding	<p>Where the Agriculture Minister forms the opinion that the proposed new or expanded ACCU project would result in an undesirable impact on agricultural production in the region where the project would be located, an adverse impact finding will be made.</p> <p>Please refer to the related definitions of ‘undesirable impacts’ and ‘region’.</p>
Agriculture Minister	<p>The Minister responsible for assessing ACCU Scheme Plantation notifications, is the Minister responsible for the Australian Government Agriculture portfolio, or their delegate.</p> <p>Section 20B (8) of the Rule, defines ‘Agriculture Minister’ as:</p> <p>(a) the Minister administering the <i>Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals Act 1994</i>; or</p> <p>(b) an SES employee, or acting SES employee, delegated responsibilities relating to this section by the Minister covered by paragraph (a).</p> <p>In this document references to ‘Agriculture Minister’ can mean a delegate from the department, consistent with paragraph (b) above.</p>
Carbon sequestration	<p>The general term used for the capture and storage of carbon dioxide. Capture can occur at the point of emission (e.g. from power plants) or through natural processes (such as photosynthesis), which remove carbon dioxide from the earth's atmosphere and which can be enhanced by appropriate management practices. Sequestration techniques include enhancing the storage of carbon in forests and other vegetation.</p>

ACCU Scheme Plantation project application (the application)	<p>An application to the Regulator relating to the process of declaring a project as an eligible offsets project such that it is eligible to receive Australian Carbon Credit Units (ACCUs) for the emission abatement achieved as part of the project.</p> <p>For more information about the application process you can refer to the <a href="#">Regulator's website</a>.</p>
ACCU Scheme Plantation notification (the notification)	<p>A notification which is the basis for the Agriculture Minister forming an opinion about whether a proposed new or expanded ACCU Scheme project would result in an undesirable impact on agricultural production in the region where the project would be located. The Rule defines these as either a new ACCU Scheme plantation notification or an ACCU Scheme plantation expansion notification.</p> <p>A notification is not a prescribed 'application form', it is a written statement that contains the information required by the Rule and these guidelines.</p> <p>Each notification will be treated and assessed as a single project regardless of the number of project areas included.</p> <p>The Rule and these guidelines set out what is required in a notification. ACCU Scheme Plantation notification is a defined term in section 20B (8) of the Rule.</p>
Methodology determination	<p>Under the ACCU Scheme eligible emissions reduction activities are defined in methodology determinations. Methodology determinations are legislative instruments setting out the rules for calculating abatement from project activities. These methodology determinations ensure that emissions reductions are genuine – that they are both real and additional to business as usual operations. Methodology determinations are often referred to as 'methods'.</p>
Offsets project	<p>Activities under the ACCU Scheme are undertaken as offsets projects including; sequestration offsets projects; or emissions avoidance offsets projects. An offsets project must be covered by, and undertaken in accordance with, a methodology determination.</p> <p>'Offsets project' is a term defined in section 5 of the Act.</p>

Personal information	<p>‘Personal information’, as defined in the <i>Privacy Act 1988</i> (the Privacy Act), means any information or opinion about an identified individual or an individual who is reasonably identifiable, whether the information or opinion is true or not, and whether the information or opinion is recorded in material form or not.</p>
Plantation forest	<p>A plantation established by planting or seeding for the harvest of forest products. A forest product can include but is not limited to: sawn products; paper-based products; biomass for bioenergy production; and essential oils.</p> <p>The Rule sets out the legal definition of a ‘Plantation forest’ in relation to notifications.</p>
Project area/s	<p>An area of land on which the project has been, is being, or is to be, carried out.</p> <p>A project area/s could be one of the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) a precise area on which the project area is to be located or;</li> <li>2) the boundaries of an area in which the proponent is looking to define a smaller project area.</li> </ol> <p>Applicants do not need to have acquired the land in the proposed project area before making a notification. However, it would be expected that the proponent has the legal right to carry out the project before applying to the Regulator.</p> <p>‘Project area/s’ is a term defined in section 5 of the Act.</p>
Purported notification	<p>An unverified notification — i.e. one that has not been assessed by the department to ensure that the required information has been provided. A ‘notification’ is not a notification until it is assessed, to ensure that it is complete — i.e. contains the required information.</p>

Region	<p>The area of land, which is in the vicinity of the proposed project area, which may be subject to undesirable impacts on agricultural production as a result of the proposed project going ahead.</p> <p>In making an assessment, the Agriculture Minister may use <a href="#">Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Statistical Area Level 2 (SA2) and Level 4 (SA4) boundaries</a>, or multiple areas where required.</p>
Undesirable impacts	<p>An undesirable impact on agricultural production in the region is where the proposed project would have an adverse or harmful impact on agricultural production in the region — including but not limited to agricultural businesses and facilities, and agriculture related businesses and facilities (e.g. agricultural product processors).</p> <p>The Agriculture Minister may broadly consider the following factors in forming an opinion about whether a project will have an undesirable impact:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The size of the proposed project area relative to the agricultural region and the proportion of arable or pastoral land in the region to be impacted.</li><li>• Type of commodities/industries to be impacted and their relative significance within the region.</li><li>• Impact on agricultural processors or agribusinesses in the region, which may then have a detrimental effect on the region's agricultural production.</li><li>• Impact on infrastructure for the agricultural industry.</li><li>• Industry trends in the region.</li><li>• Recent land use changes.</li><li>• Whether the proponent has considered bushfire, soil, weed and pest management for the project.</li><li>• Other information on the region's agricultural sector and potential impacts.</li></ul>



# Appendix A – requirements of the Rule: proponent’s checklist

Proponents considering a project involving the establishment of a new plantation forest, or an expanded plantation forest must meet the following requirements. If the following requirements (among others – please refer to the ACCU project application process undertaken by the Regulator) are not met, the proposed project will be deemed to be an excluded offsets project. It is encouraged that proponents use this checklist in preparing and reviewing a notification prior to submission.

- For each proposed new plantation forestry project or expansion project, a notification must be submitted in the period beginning 18 months prior to the date of an application to the Regulator and ending on the day of that application.
  - a notification by email ([erfnotification@aff.gov.au](mailto:erfnotification@aff.gov.au)) to the department.
  - an application to the Regulator, which is accompanied by a notification which relates to the application; and any information sent in connection with that notification.
- notification contains the required information, as follows:
  - the name, address and contact details of the proponent, including a designated email address for receipt of all correspondence relating to the notification.
  - the address/es of the property/ies involved in the project.
  - a statement that outlines that the proponent is planning to either: vary the declaration of an existing eligible offsets project to add an area of land to the project area for the project; or seek the declaration of a project to establish a new plantation forest as an eligible offsets project.
  - the maximum area in hectares, of plantation to be included under the proposed project.
  - a geospatial map of the proposed ERF project area/s at an appropriate scale consistent with the [CFI Mapping Guidelines | Clean Energy Regulator](#).
  - a statement outlining the previous five years of agricultural land use history within the project area, including the area, in hectares, of each land use type.
  - a statement outlining the previous five years of agricultural production history of agricultural commodities within the project area, including the area, in hectares, of each commodity **OR**
    - a statutory declaration proving an inability to provide production history, where five years of production data is not available.

- a statement outlining the project's potential impact on agricultural production in the region, that considers:
  - projected changes in the region's agricultural production as a result of the proposed project, including:
    - effects on the regional agricultural industry such as potential reduced supply to agricultural processors and agribusinesses.
    - bushfire, soil, weed and pest management.
    - any other information deemed to be relevant by the proponent.
- The project considered by the Agriculture Minister (as outlined in a notification) must be largely the same as the project considered by the Regulator (as outlined in an application). In doing so the following requirements have been met:
  - all of the proposed project area for the project (as set out in the application) is within the potential project area set out in the notification.
  - the size of the proposed project area (as set out in the application) does not exceed the maximum project area size set out in the notification.

# Appendix B — the assessment process: step-by-step

## Stage 1 – Submitting and assessing a purported notification

The proponent must send their purported notification to the department via email ([erfnotification@aff.gov.au](mailto:erfnotification@aff.gov.au)). A purported notification can be submitted on the same day or in the period beginning 18 months prior to the date of making an application to the Regulator. The proponent's nominated contact will receive confirmation of receipt of the notification. All correspondence must be submitted via email to eliminate the possibility of exceeding legislated timeframes as a result of postal delays.

Following the proponent's submission of the purported notification, an assessment of the information provided will be undertaken to ensure it is complete. If the purported notification contains the required information, it is considered valid and will proceed to stage 2 to be assessed. If the purported notification does not contain the required information, the notification is taken to have never been made and the assessment process will not begin. The department will notify the proponent as to whether the purported notification is valid. If a purported notification is not valid the department will also outline what information is missing. Proponents are encouraged to contact the department prior to submitting a notification, in order to discuss requirements so that they can avoid submitting an invalid notification.

In circumstances where a purported notification is found to be incomplete, proponents may need to withdraw an application made to the Regulator to ensure it is consistent with the timeframes mentioned above. A new project application may need to be submitted with a complete notification.

## Stage 2 – Primary assessment: initial findings (within 30 calendar days of notification being lodged)

The timeframe for assessing the notification in stage 2 begins on the day that the complete notification was initially lodged. Within 30 calendar days, one of the following scenarios will occur:

- 1) the Agriculture Minister, will send a written statement (the original written statement) via email to the proponent stating that the Agriculture Minister intends to make an adverse impact finding. This is where the Agriculture Minister forms a preliminary view that the project will lead to an undesirable impact on agricultural production; or
- 2) the department will provide notice (via email) that the Agriculture Minister does not intend to make an adverse impact finding and the project as outlined in the application can proceed to be considered by the Regulator. It is noted that the project may only be approved by the Regulator after 30 calendar days has passed since the proponent submitted a notification.

### **Stage 3 – Additional assessment: proponent response period (within 20 calendar days of the Agriculture Minister providing the original written statement)**

Where the proponent receives a written statement from the Agriculture Minister stating that the Agriculture Minister intends to make an adverse impact finding, the proponent has the opportunity, within 20 calendar days, to send a response to the department via email ([erfnotification@aff.gov.au](mailto:erfnotification@aff.gov.au)) with further information. An acknowledgement of receipt of the original written statement that does not address the issues raised by the Agriculture Minister will not be considered a 'response'. The nominated contact will receive confirmation of receipt of the response, if provided.

### **Stage 4.1 – Additional assessment: Scenario 1: proponent's response not provided (within 30 calendar days of Agriculture Minister providing the original written statement)**

Where the proponent does not provide their response within 20 calendar days of the original written statement, the Agriculture Minister will send a written statement to the proponent within 30 calendar days of that statement, stating that no response was received and that the project will be an 'excluded offsets project'.

### **Stage 4.2 – Additional assessment: Scenario 2: response provided (within 45 calendar days of Agriculture Minister providing original written statement)**

Where a response is provided within 20 calendar days of the original written statement, a final decision will be provided to the proponent within 45 calendar days of sending the original written statement. On the basis of the information provided by the proponent, one of the following scenarios will occur:

- 1) The Agriculture Minister will send a written statement (via email) to the proponent outlining the Agriculture Minister's decision to make an adverse impact finding. This is because the Agriculture Minister is of the opinion that the project will have an undesirable impact on agricultural production; or
- 2) The department will provide notice (via email) to the proponent outlining that the Agriculture Minister does not intend to make an adverse impact finding, and that the project can proceed to be considered by the Regulator. The project may only be approved by the Regulator after 45 calendar days have passed since the Agriculture Minister sent the original written statement.

## Example assessment process

The following example outlines the assessment process as outlined above.

A proponent wants to start a new plantation forestry project. First, they prepare a notification which includes a geospatial map of the potential project area, the maximum additional project area size, in hectares, a statement of any potential impacts of carrying out the project in the project area on agricultural production in the region, and information required by the guidelines to ACCU Scheme Plantation Forestry notifications as published on Department of Agriculture and Water Resources' website. They send the purported notification to the department via email ([erfnotification@aff.gov.au](mailto:erfnotification@aff.gov.au)). The purported notification nominates an email address for the receipt of all correspondence.

Upon receipt of the purported notification, the department confirms receipt of the notification and proceeds to assess whether the required information has been provided. As the purported notification includes all of the required information, the nominated contact receives notice that the notification will be assessed.

Within 30 calendar days, the Agriculture Minister writes to the proponent to notify them of their intention to make a finding that the project would have an undesirable impact on agricultural production in the region. The Agriculture Minister invites the proponent to submit a written response within 20 calendar days to the designated departmental email account.

Within 20 calendar days, the proponent submits a written response providing further information in relation to the proposed project and its potential impact on agricultural production in the region.

The proponent needs to wait for up to a further 25 calendar days (45 calendar days since the original written statement was sent) for any written advice on whether the Agriculture Minister has found the project would have an adverse impact on agricultural production in the region. As the proponent does not receive a written statement from the Agriculture Minister after 45 calendar days the project can proceed to be assessed by the Regulator, and could be approved by the Regulator if all other scheme requirements are met.